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JOHN WESLEY

AND

HIS DORSET FORBEARS



BRIDPORT:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. & E. FROST, WEST STREET.

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JOHN WESLEY AND HIS DORSET FORBEARS.

THE attention of the compiler of these volumes was first directed to Bartholomew Wesley, of Charmouth, from his connection with the dramatic adventures of Charles II. in that village, just three weeks after Worcester Fight. On the 10th July, 1903, he addressed the following letter to the *Bridport News*:—

WHERE BARTHOLOMEW WESLEY RESTS.

SIR,—It may interest a few at least of the visitors to our Western Riviera during the present season to know something of the unique historical associations which belong to "Lyme of the King," outside the tragic details of the Monmouth rebellion; the famous landslip, and the still more famous fossils. Although Charles II. never came nearer Lyme than the picturesque "house in the hills" at Monkton Wyld in September, 1651, many of those who played a prominent part in the Dorset scene of that great romance of English history, "the flight from Worcester," sleep their last sleep either in Lyme church or the surrounding graveyard. Captain William Ellesdon, who organized the unsuccessful project of the proscribed prince's escape from the Dorset coast, is buried at Charmouth, but hidden beneath the matting which covers the stone floor of Lyme church is a brass (erected only three years after that memorable year, 1651), which marks the resting place of four generations of his ancestors. It bears the Ellesdon arms as well as the familiar emblems of mortality, together with the following quaint inscription:—

"Here lyeth buried the Body of Ralph Ellesdon of Lyme Regis gentleman, allso here lyeth buried the Body of Thomas son of the sayd Ralph also here lyeth buried the body of William son of the sayd Thomas allso here lyeth buried the body of Anthony son of the said William which sayd Anthony deceased the 12th day of September 1655."

"Men pious just and wise each many a year
The helme of this town's government did steere
Beyond base envious reach whose endless name
Lives in all those that emulate their fame."

Next to Captain Ellesdon, the four most important local actors in the Carolean drama were unquestionably Bartholomew Wesley, the Puritan Minister at Charmouth, whose lengthy sermon enabled the

fugitives to make good their precipitate retreat to Bridport; Dame Margaret Wade, the loyal hostess of the Queen's Head, and the Limbrys—husband and wife. Bartholomew Wesley was the great-grandfather of the great Apostle of Methodism, the bi-centenary of whose birth has just been celebrated. Ejected from his preferment in 1662, Bartholomew Wesley first went to Bridport, where he practised as a surgeon for some years, but he evidently ultimately settled in Lyme Regis, for in the Lyme registers I discovered the following entry:—“Februerie 1670. Mr. Bartholomew Wesly buried 15 die.” Another Bartholomew Wesley (probably a son or grandson) resided at Catherstone Lewson. On the 30th September, 1675 (according to the Charmouth registers) he married Elizabeth Pitts. He died in 1715, and was interred at Charmouth. In 1658 John, son of Bartholomew Wesley, held the living of Winterbourne-Whitchurch, in East Dorset. He was probably born at Bridport or Allington in or about the year 1636, for Bartholomew Wesley lived at Bridport prior to his twelve years tenure of office at Charmouth, and the fine Jacobean (1608) pulpit he preached in at Allington (removed from the old church demolished in 1827, and replaced by the existing classical edifice), may still be seen in the Wesleyan schoolroom at Bridport. The discovery of the burial entry of Bartholomew Wesley at Lyme will doubtless interest many members of the Wesleyan church on both sides of the Atlantic, for William Beal, in his “Fathers of the Wesley Family, Clergymen in Dorsetshire,” concludes his brief biography of Bartholomew Wesley with the following words:—“He had long remained among the comparatively unknown, nor is there a record or stone to tell the time and place of his death, or where his ashes lie. But through a people raised up by the instrumentality of his great-grandchildren, his name has a monument, read or reported from Charmouth to the ends of the earth.” Wesleyans may now know that Bartholomew Wesley, the “ejected-minister” of Charmouth, sleeps in the beautiful sea-girt churchyard at Lyme—almost within sight of the “Whitechapel Rocks” and the secluded dell where he and his persecuted and prescribed parishioners were wont to meet during the troublous times which followed the restoration. John Wesley of Whitchurch, who became far better known than his father, altho’ he predeceased him, married in 1658 a niece of the famous Thomas Fuller, of Broadwindsor, the immortal author of the “Worthies of England,” and Lyme Regis may claim him also as a citizen, for in the following year his father gave him his freehold fields in the outskirts of the town and the counter part of the deed signed by John Wesley and others is now in possssion of the writer. It was executed only a few days after the birth of his elder son Timothy, brother of Samuel Wesley of Epworth, and uncle

of John, the greatest of all the Wesleys. The writer does not propose to follow the brief career of John Wesley I., or even allude to his historic controversy with Bishop Ironside, his diocesan, his subsequent tribulations, and his untimely death at Preston, near Weymouth, in "the mean cottage" where he sought a shelter from the penalties of the "Five Mile Act." Mr. Beal tells us his death occurred "about 1670," and it may possibly have been the proximate cause of the decease of his father, who we now know was buried at Lyme Regis on the 15th February, 1670.

Should not some modest brass or other tablet commemorate on the walls of Lyme church the lives and deaths of these two distinguished Dorset divines, who unquestionably played an important part in the history of the stirring times in which they flourished? Would not the erection of such a memorial admirably accord with the spirit with which the Wesley bi-centenary has just been celebrated, for only thirty years, roughly speaking, divides the death in Dorsetshire of Bartholomew and John Wesley I. from the birth at Epworth of John Wesley II.?

In the Charmouth registers I came on the burial entry of Margaret Wade, dubbed facetiously "A Maid of Honor" by Bartholomew Wesley. The loyal landlady of the Queen's Head survived till March, 1685, for on the 25th of that month, and in the year of Monmouth's rebellion, I find the entry of her burial at Charmouth. She, therefore, survived the dramatic events of September 22nd and 23rd, 1651, for thirty-four years. The seaman who agreed with Captain (afterwards Colonel) Ellesdon for the conveyance of the disguised King from Charmouth beach to the coast of France, was one Limbry. His Christian name was said to be "Stephen," but in the seventeenth century Christian names were somewhat loosely used by contemporary writers in dealing with men of his condition of life, and at that time Limbrys seem to have been as plentiful at Lyme and Charmouth as leaves in Vallambrosa. Curiously enough the Limbrys and Wades frequently intermarried, and this may have had something to do with the choice of the Queen's Head as Charles II.'s haven of refuge at Charmouth. After a careful examination of the registers, both at Lyme and Charmouth, I am inclined to identify William Limbry (buried at Lyme on the 13th October, 1675) with the master mariner who "failed" the King on the night of the 22nd—23rd September, 1651, and so missed the world-wide fame of Captain Nicholas Tattersall, who lies in the shadow of Brighton old church, and Jane Limbry Vedove (widow), laid to rest on the 20th December, 1676, as his cautious wife, who occasioned that failure by locking him bodily up in his bedroom and so preventing his running the risk he contemplated.

I trust the addition I have endeavoured to make to the annals of

the Fathers of the Wesley Family, at a time when their name and history are specially before the public, and the details I now contribute through your columns to the oft-told narrative of Charles II.'s brief, but momentous, stay in Dorsetshire, may excuse the unwarrantable length at which I have trespassed on your valuable space.

A. M. BROADLEY.

The Knapp, July 5th, 1903.

In commemoration of the bicentenary of the birth of John Wesley II., in 1703, his life, published in 1792 by his contemporaries and associates, Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore, has been grangerized by the addition of numerous portraits and views, together with a series of holograph letters written by the brothers John and Charles Wesley; their friend and fellow-worker, George Whitefield; Wesley's celebrated pupil, the Rev. James Hervey; the Rev. Adam Clarke, and others; as well as the original signed deed-of-gift, by which John Wesley (in the year preceding his death) bestowed the Orphan-House, in Northumberland Street, Newcastle, on his followers in that town.

The John Wesley letters in this collection are as follows:—Wesley to his niece, Polly Ellison (1777); Wesley to John Bredin (1779); Wesley to Adam Clarke (March, 1788); and Wesley to W. Churchey (June, 1788). They are written respectively from Stroud, London, Whitby, and Bristol.

The compiler has received material help from Mr. W. V. Daniell, of 53, Mortimer Street, London; Dr. Scott, of 31, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.; and Mr. Thomas Hayes, of 50, Broke Road, Dalston, N.E., the venerable author of "Fifty Years of Methodist Life."

A. M. BROADLEY.

Bridport, July, 1903.

